

## KANDOS SUBDIVISIONS AND THE QUARTER ACRE BLOCK

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This article by Colleen O'Sullivan appeared in the *Mudgee Guardian* on 17 May 2016

The Australian dream to own a ‘quarter acre block’ entered the Australian psyche around the time Kandos was established in 1915 (though that dream grew dramatically after World War 2).

The industrial revolution had harmfully impacted town and countryside in the nineteenth century and by the early twentieth century progressive professional men - surveyors, architects, engineers, politicians, businessmen and doctors - were beginning to advocate for town planning which provided healthier environments for workers.

One of the directors of the Kandos cement company, Charles Jaques, had in 1911 helped establish the model industrial suburb of Rosebery, where workers could buy a quarter acre block on manageable terms, to build a free-standing house and garden, in which to raise their family. Jaques’ vision for Rosebery became the company’s vision for Kandos.

In launching the sale of 200 building lots in their first ‘splendid subdivision of business and residential sites adjoining the great new works’, the NSW Cement Lime and Coal Company proudly boasted, ‘the future of Kandos is assured’. They had already established a railway station, and their subdivision plan showed a wider than usual main street and two open spaces. In Kandos no back lanes were built for services, the directors wrongly anticipating sewerage rather than a pan system.

A quarter acre block, which also measures one rood or 1000 square metres, usually had a 66 feet frontage. There was plenty of room for a home and healthy lifestyle: a veggie and flower garden with fruit trees, wood and coal heaps, a garage, dunny, water tank, clothesline, dog kennel and chook pen, and room enough for the children to play a game of cricket or rounders.

Many, besides the directors of the cement company, were convinced that the future of Kandos was assured. Not just the many who bought land at that first land sale but those who climbed on the subdivision bandwagon.

The first was local farmer Thomas Lloyd who offered 77 blocks in his Ferndale Estate on the opposite side of the railway line. Soon after, the government got in on the act with two crown subdivisions east and west of the company’s - 62 blocks in total.

Another local farmer John Donoghue, who had much of his farming land on or near Mt Pomany, as well as several blocks near Kandos, made four different subdivisions east and west of Dabee Road to create 136 town lots. Cement company architect Stanley Jeffreys created a subdivision of 20 lots; Sydney real estate agents, Slade Brown and Bloomfield, created the Progress Heights Estate of 31 blocks; and the George family offered a subdivision of 21 half-acre blocks.

During this time the company created four more subdivisions totalling a further 284 lots. All up, in nine years, 15 subdivisions were created in Kandos of 831 quarter acre blocks (or

larger). Surprisingly right up to the Great Depression there was a shortage of housing in Kandos.

That number, 831, doesn't reflect the number of houses in Kandos today (though I haven't counted them). Some lots were subdivided for two houses. Others were never built on or the houses perhaps burnt or fell down. Still others were used for public facilities like schools, churches, parks etc.

There is one area of Kandos not included in the above subdivisions, though it housed at least twenty squatting families. It is an area of Crown land opposite Henbury golf course which now contains the swimming pool, Rotary Park and 10 portions fronting Saville Row, Larges Lane and Ilford Road. It was locally known as Criminal Hill (though sometimes given the more respectable name Hatton's Hill) and became the third Crown subdivision which was sold off in the 1970s or later.

The man who surveyed most of the town of Kandos was James Dawson, a name familiar to many Kandosians. He is memorialised on Henbury Avenue, Henbury Golf Course and the gates at Kandos Museum, Henbury being the name of the Dawson property.

It was James Dawson who deposited most of the subdivision plans for registration at the Lands Department. Deposited Plans, as they are called, have a number beginning DP. For example DP8161 is the deposited plan for the first subdivision at Kandos. The DP is a map showing: the streets contained in the subdivision, the portion(s) of land that was subdivided, the parish and county, neighbouring land, the sections of the plan and the numbered lots within each section. Each lot can thus be identified eg lot 5, section 6, DP8161.

All the Kandos subdivision plans are reproduced in my book *Streetwise*. They are also available on the Land & Property Information website through its Spatial Information Exchange (SIX) <https://six.nsw.gov.au/wps/portal>. There are two sections on that homepage which I used regularly: SIX maps (to find current information about any area in NSW) and HLRV (Historical Land Records Viewer for access to historical maps, plans, titles and indexes). Much can be downloaded and printed for free or purchased on-line within minutes.\*

I hesitate to give this warning in case I dampen your research enthusiasm but the Land and Property site is a complex and at times confusing one. However the information available to local and family historians is well worth the effort. I attended two excellent information sessions given by Terry Kass and run by State Archives at Penrith in 2014 and the Royal Australian Historical Society here at Mudgee in 2015. Terry Kass is willing to visit regional areas if there is enough interest.

Land and Property Information holds the cadastre of NSW – a comprehensive, official register of land showing details of ownership, boundaries, and value, made for taxation purposes. Each lot in Kandos is held under Torrens Title, a Certificate of Title which records all details and interests affecting that piece of land including transfers, mortgages, leases, easements, covenants, resumptions etc; all guaranteed correct by the state.

One significant and surprising caveat on lots in the company subdivisions, is a caveat preventing the building of a hotel on those lots. The caveat was added in order to protect the monopoly of the Kandos Hotel. That monopoly was broken after twelve years and numerous

petitions and appeals, when the Railway Hotel was built on the western Crown subdivision in 1927.

The aspiration of home ownership on a quarter acre block is dwindling, certainly in the city where new lots are less than half the size, and the cost of any residence is out of the range of most young buyers. If only they could be persuaded to grow their young families on a country town quarter acre block with home office attached!

\*Note the following information from Wikipedia:

The New South Wales Land and Property Information, a division of the Department of Finance, Services and Innovation in the Government of New South Wales, was the division responsible for land titles, property information, valuation, surveying, and mapping and spatial information in New South Wales. From 1 July 2017, the operation was transferred to Australian Registry Investments, a private consortium, under a 35 year concession with the NSW government. The LPI was subsequently renamed and replaced by the NSW Land Registry Services on 1 December 2017.